

GOD IN HEAVEN, AND MEN ON THE SEA

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A SERMON
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*“By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation;
who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.”*
Psalm 65:5

PLEASE read the sixty-fifth psalm through. May it do you good, whether as landmen you read of the Lord's settling the furrows, or as sailors you hear of His stilling the noise of the seas. Notice the first two verses—“Praise waiteth for thee,” “O thou that hearest prayer.” *Holy men of old were accustomed to mix praise and prayer together*, this is a happy mixture. We are not tied to one thing. We spread the sails of prayer, and fly the flag of praise.

To praise God without praying to Him would be impossible. To pray to God without praising Him would be ungrateful. Praise takes in a cargo of gold for the King of kings, and prayer stokes the fires to make the good ship steam towards the royal city. Brothers, keep to this throughout all the watches, *pray and praise*, and when you want a change, *praise and pray*. Keep the boat of the soul going with these two oars, praise and prayer.

Notice also, in this psalm, that when the saints of the olden time offered prayer and praise, *they addressed themselves at once to God, and not to saints and angels*. David is not satisfied with talking about God, but he talks *to* Him, as in our text, “Thou wilt answer us, O God of our salvation.” There's nothing like straight sailing, let us go to God direct.

We ought not to think of what our fellow men will say of our praises, if they are not musical in the ears of men it matters little, so long as they are sweet to the Lord our God. When we engage in public prayer, it is a pity to be thinking about how our words will sound in the opinion of our brethren, let us only think of the Lord to whom we are speaking.

We can't steer two ways at once, if we make for the mercy seat, we need not consider the pews. Let us fix our eye on the lighthouse at the mouth of the harbor, and leave the church on the hill, and the windmill over yonder, for other people to look at. Brothers, look to your captain, and let your mates think what they like. Let us know our port and steer for it, and let the twin-ship of prayer and praise never take any course but that which carries our whole heart straight to heaven.

I. First then, dear friends, let us consider WHAT THE LORD IS TO US, He is the “God of our salvation.”

It is clear from this that *we all need salvation*. If it were not clear in this text, we could not doubt it, for the evidence surrounds us on every side. We have, sadly, sufficient proof of our lost estate. Human nature is waterlogged, and ready to sink, and in God alone is our hope.

The text tells us where salvation is, namely, in God. God is the God of our salvation. You have neither right ideas of yourself, nor right ideas of God, unless you see that by nature you have need of being saved from sin—saved by nothing less than a divine hand. The greatest saint on earth is still a sinner. Let him have safely sailed on the sea of life for sixty years, he will be on the rocks before the morning watch unless the Lord save him.

The most intelligent man, and the man of longest experience, still needs saving. The oldness of a ship does not increase its seaworthiness. Ask at Lloyd's if a ship is any safer because it has been afloat more than sixty years. No man that lives is safe from rocks, and quicksands, and tempests, or even from

foundering at sea unless the Lord God shall be always the God of his salvation. We have all need to ask for salvation from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, and the curse of sin, and it should be our great joy that the Lord graciously condescends to provide all this for us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

It is this salvation which brings God to us and us to God. I do not think that very many find out God by what they see in nature. Men see the works of God, but they do not see God in His works. There is such a thing, I suppose, as going “from nature up to nature’s God,” but it is a hard climb for cripples, like the most of us. To lift your foot even from the top of the highest mountain to the lowest step of the throne of God is a tremendous effort. Human nature does not care for such an upward climb.

The ready way to God, by which tens of thousands have come to Him, is by Jesus Christ our Savior. No man ever comes to God except by Jesus, who is the way of salvation. There may be other channels, but this is the only navigable one. Our boats draw too much water to get to God along the shallow straits of human learning. We shall be wise to keep to the deep waters of redeeming love, for by this channel God came to us.

The glorious God came here to earth in the person of His Son, that He might reconcile us to Himself, and so save us. Where there is depth enough for God to come to man, there is a fair sea-way for man to come to God. Remember that the Lord Jesus came for our salvation. “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” Salvation brought God to us, and salvation must bring us to God, or else we shall be castaways. Blessed forever be our gracious and glorious God, for in every man that is saved, He is the God of his salvation in Christ Jesus.

The salvation that we get is entirely from God. If you ever hear of salvation that does not come from God, depend upon it, it is not seaworthy, but will turn out to be one of those worm-eaten coffin ships. I would not trust a dog on board of it. If I were to preach a merely human salvation to you, it would not be worth your while to listen to me. “Salvation is of the Lord” is the saying of Jonah, from the depths of the sea.

This salvation began in God’s everlasting purpose, in His sacred covenant, in His divine choice of His people. It is carried out by the life and death of our Savior. It is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, by whom we are quickened, illuminated, converted, and brought to faith in Jesus. Salvation is of the Lord, from stem to stern, from truck to keel. There is not a bit of rope on board, nor even a spar up aloft, which is of man’s merit or working. Christ is the A, and He is the Z of the salvation alphabet. He is not only the helper of our salvation, but the God of it, the Maker of it, the All-in-all of it.

Have any of you a salvation which you have manufactured for yourselves? Then drop it overboard and row away from it as fast as you can, lest it should be a torpedo to work your ruin. The only salvation that can redeem from hell is a salvation which comes from heaven. Eternal salvation must come from an eternal God. Salvation that makes you a new creature must be the work of Him who sits upon the throne and makes all things new.

It is a remarkable thing that *in this salvation there is a strange mixture of the terrible and the gracious*. “By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.” In the death of our Lord Jesus we see the salvation of God, in this the Lord is terrible against sin, but most tender to the sinner. God did not put up the sword of His justice, for He was bound to use it. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” To do right He must punish sin. And oh, how terrible it is to view our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, bowing His head to death in the sinner’s place, and bearing in His own innocent person the wrath of God an account of sin. Our children’s hymn puts the truth exactly—

*“He saw how wicked men had been,
And knew that God must punish sin;
So, out of pity, Jesus said
He’d bear the punishment instead.”*

In that verse, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord has perfected praise. It was indeed a display of terrible things in righteousness when the perfect Son of God was made to sweat great drops of blood, and to be in an agony in Gethsemane. Terrible things in righteousness were manifest when He was scourged, and spit upon, and nailed to a tree and made to die without the comfort of His Father's presence, crying in anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Ah, friends, when the Father's best Beloved bore those unknown sufferings by which the honor of the divine government was maintained, it was a very terrible day. Not even the pains of the lost are more terrible for a tender and devout mind to think upon, than our Lord's being made a curse for us when He was hanged upon the tree. We seek salvation, the Lord JEHOVAH answers us, and bids us behold it in the blood of His Only begotten Son—"By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God."

So, also, when God came to deal with us by His Spirit, He mixed the terror with the grace. If you have been praying to God to save you, then, if He has answered you, you have had a vision of terrible things. To see your guilt, your present ruin, and your future doom, is to be made to tremble terribly. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to our vessel, walking on the sea, He finds us in an awful storm. The sails are torn to ribbons, and every timber groans. We see ourselves wrecked by nature before we see ourselves saved by Grace.

Conviction of sin does not come to every sinner with the same degree of force, but to some of us, when we were under the bondage of the law neither sun nor moon appeared, the sea wrought and was tempestuous, and all hope that we should be saved was taken away from us. We reeled to and fro, and staggered like drunken men. We were at our wits' ends, we did not then know that the God of our salvation has His way in the whirlwind.

The Lord comes to us with a drawn sword before He comes with a silver scepter! He designs to make us give up self-righteousness and self-confidence, and come and lay hold on Christ, to be our all in all. Men won't take to the lifeboat of salvation while they think their own craft can be kept afloat, but when their vessel is settling down at the head, they are glad to see the lifeboat near.

The God of our salvation has revealed Himself to many of us, not as one who winks at sin, but as a consuming fire. In these days a God is preached who is not in the Bible, nor yet on the sea. Our God is not the new god of proud philosophers, but the God of the olden times. We know that the true God is just, as well as gracious, and will by no means allow His laws to be despised. You that go down to the sea in ships, you know that the God of the sea is terrible upon the roaring billows, when the sea runs mountains high. He is tender, and kind, and loving, but oh, how terrible when He puts on His dark robes of tempest!

He sets the heavens on a blaze, and His terrible voice is heard above the roaring of the sea. The elements are in confusion. Deep calleth unto deep, the heavens clasp hands with the ocean, and the largest vessel seems like a cockle-shell, soon to sink and no more to be seen. He is a dreadful God, this God of ours! There is none like Him in power and justice. Well may the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" This makes us feel that He can smite with iron hand when once He comes forth to deal with sin. Behold the Red Sea! See how the adversaries of JEHOVAH sink to the bottom as a stone! He is terrible out of His holy places. He is the God of heaven, but a pit is digged for the wicked. The Lord makes His saved ones to know Him as He is, and not as He is made out to be by those who would seem to be wiser than the Scriptures.

I trust that many of you can say of the Lord, "He is the God of my salvation. JEHOVAH, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is my hope and my joy." He is glorious in holiness, and terrible in righteousness, and I love Him all the more because He hates iniquity, and will not endure evil.

The difficulty with most men is that they will not have God to be their Savior, they want to save themselves. Every man thinks he can be his own pilot to the port of glory. But what can we do? What merit? what wisdom? what strength have we? We are proud fools and deceive ourselves.

I have heard a story of a man on board a vessel which was coming home from the other side of the world. He was very conceited, and interfered with everything. Every now and then a captain does get such a man on board. He was always grumbling and making trouble. The ship met with rough weather, and this meddlesome gentleman picked up the notion that things were in a very bad way, and the ship might go down.

He was getting into everybody's way, and so the captain, calling him to one side, told him that it was highly important that he should keep very quiet for the next hour or two, especially, that he should hold fast a certain rope to which he pointed out to him. Nobody could tell what might depend on his holding on to that rope, and saying nothing to anybody. Our noisy friend felt himself to be a person of consequence, put his feet down and set his teeth together, and in a very determined manner stuck to his rope. If anybody came along, instead of talking, as he was used to do, he held his tongue. Just as you must not speak to the man at the wheel, so he felt that no one was allowed to speak to him. Did not the safety of the ship depend upon his being quiet and holding tightly to that rope?

He kept his post with due gravity till the wind dropped, and then he did not say much, for his sense of merit made him modest, of course. He waited patiently for the passengers to present him with a piece of plate for having saved the ship. He felt, at any rate, that deep gratitude was due to him for his wonderful exertions. It was about the most difficult thing he had ever done in his life, for he had held his tongue for hours, and thus made a martyr of himself to save them all.

As nobody thanked him, he began to hint at the importance of the service he had rendered. But they did not seem to see it, for you know, people will not always see a thing that is very plain. At last he stated his case more fully, and became so exacting that the captain had to tell him that he had only given him that bit of rope to hold just to keep him quiet, and that, really, he had not contributed, in the least degree, to the safety of the vessel.

That is just what I feel inclined by do with certain vastly important persons who think they can do wonders in the things of God. If you will keep from boasting, and stand out of the Lord's way, that is as much as I hope for from you. And if the Lord leads you to trust yourself in Jesus' hands, then all will be safe enough. With God to save us, what is there for us to do but to trust, and not to be afraid?

II. I have set forth what God is to us. Now let us see WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR US.

Don't doubt it, the Lord has an open ear to hear His people's prayers.

He will answer us. This shows that *we must all pray*. Every believing man in the world must pray, and we shall never get into such a state of grace that we have no need to pray.

But what do we pray for? Well, according to the text, one of the most important things is to *pray against sin*. "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shall purge them away." Do we not need to pray daily for cleansing? This must be the prayer of the man who is seeking the Lord for the first time. Does the leak of sin gain upon you? Are the pirates of temptation all around you so that you cannot get away from them? Are you compelled to say, "Iniquities prevail against me"? Cry to the Lord Jesus to come to the rescue. A word from Him will stop the leak and drive the demons back when they are boarding you. Pray to Him at once.

Do I address a backslider? Did you once own the name of Christ? Have you taken down the old flag? Are you now trading under other colors? Are you sorry it is so? Do iniquities prevail against you? Ah, then come to the Lord again! Ask Him to come and take possession of you. The pirates are on board now, and you cannot get rid of them, but as for your iniquities, He can "purge them away." He can sweep the deck of them.

If you have been long a Christian, and have not backslidden, you will have, as you grow in grace, more and more a sense of the sin that dwelleth in you. You will be crying out every day, "Lord, keep me; for I shall perish utterly, even now, after all my experience, unless Thou preserve me from my inbred sin, and the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil." Cry to God tonight in that fashion. Ask to be steered clear of all evil, and to be presented faultless. When we are close in shore we need a pilot more than ever. We shall be wrecked in the river's mouth unless the Lord preserves us. Iniquities

will prevail unless omnipotent grace prevails. In this direction we shall always need to cry mightily unto the Preserver of men.

We also pray *for nearer fellowship with God*. Just let me read you the next words. “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee.” Lord, help me to approach unto Thee, so as to know Thy love and love Thee in return. Let us go on reading the record, “That he may dwell in thy courts.” Lord, help me to be one of Thy court, and always to live in Thy presence.

“We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.” Do you not long for that satisfaction? Is there not in your hearts, my beloved brethren, a great desire to get nearer to God, and to abide in His house?

Oh, to have a continual enjoyment of the favor of God! May the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost! Blessed be the name of the Lord our God, He will hear and answer that prayer. As He will help you to conquer sin, so will He also help you to grow in grace. There is no reason why we should not be far happier and far holier than we are. If we are straitened at all, we are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. It is not that there is no wind, but we do not spread enough sail. If you do not enter into the deep things of God with understanding, and if you do not enjoy them with delight, you must blame yourselves. You have not, because you ask not, or because you ask amiss. If a man will not take the tide while it flows, it will be his own fault if the ebb bears him away from the harbor. If we pray, God will answer.

But remember, if we pray to be delivered from sin, and to be brought nearer to the Lord, *He may answer us by terrible things in righteousness*. I would like to whisper these words in the ears of all praying men. Often you know not what you ask, and perhaps if you really knew how God would answer you, you would not pray as you now do.

You were praying the other day that God would sanctify you, and now you see more of the workings of evil in your nature than ever before. Crosses and losses have come upon you thick and threefold, temptations and evil thoughts have beset you more fiercely than ever, and you are saying, “Lord, is this the answer to my prayer?” Yes, by terrible things in righteousness He is answering you. The sheep desires to be brought near to the shepherd, and the shepherd sends his black dog to fetch it home. Our trials and troubles, afflictions and adversities, are among the best medicines of our Great Physician. A trial has been love’s reply to earnest desire. God’s wisdom often chooses to give us a head wind to prevent our rushing upon sunken rocks.

Dear friends, *God will answer you surely, though He answers you strangely*. He answers roughly, but rightly. The help of no other can suffice you, but if you cry to God you shall find His strength to be all-sufficient, both for crushing sin and for growth in grace. See what the Lord has been doing for the earth during the last few weeks of spring! Only a few weeks ago we went out of doors and saw nothing but the earth wrapped in a winding-sheet of snow, or perhaps, the dull, black ground soaking in rain.

Where were the myriads of leaves that now clothe the trees, and where the kingcups and daisies which bedeck the meadows and make them bright as cloth of gold? Where was all this wealth of flowers? Where all this music of song birds? God came. He breathed in pity on the frozen brooks, and loosed the waters from their icy chains. He unbound the iron bonds of winter. He made the world look up and laugh with flowers. Brethren, He will do the same with us. Though this may be the winter of our soul’s grief, and it may be needful that we should endure it for a little while longer, yet He will answer us, and after an interval of terrible storm He will bless us with rest and joy.

III. The third point is this, WHAT THE LORD IS TO “THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.”

He is “the confidence of the ends of the earth.” All men have a confidence, and they are wise who place all their confidence in God.

Who are “the ends of the earth”? They may be those who live in the extremes of climate—the dwellers at the poles and at the equator. These are so tried by cold and by heat, that one would think they would hardly live in such regions if they did not confide in God. Those who live at the ends of the earth

are farthest off. God is worthy to be the confidence of those who are farthest off from His church, from His Gospel, from hope, from anything that is good, and from God Himself.

This sermon may, one of these days, reach somebody who will say to himself, “I think that I am the farthest off from God of anybody that ever lived. I have been guilty of cursing and swearing, and I have committed all manner of vice, and so I have gone as far away from God and the very name of religion as it is possible for a man to go.” Friend, our God is worthy to be *your* confidence, even yours. You are permitted to put your trust in Him and find salvation in Him, even in His Son Jesus Christ, who cries “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”

The ends of the earth may mean also, *those that are least known.* Are there not men scattered abroad of whom nobody knows anything? They do not, themselves, know who their father and mother were, and nobody cares to own them. Nobody calls them brother, or knows where they came from. They wish to be forgotten, they would not like to have their stories told. Their character is such that they can get on better without it than with it.

Well, but Jesus Christ is worthy to be the confidence of those who are least known. They are known to Him, He knows their past and their present. Oh, that sinners who are far off in that way, and least known, would come and put their trust in Him!

The ends of the earth *are the parts that are least thought of.* We dart a thought towards France with its Exhibition, we think of Germany and its vast army, we think of the United States and the many there of our kith and kin. These lie within the pale of our thought and consideration, but who cares for Dahomey or Nova Zembla? Of the ends of the earth no one thinks.

Do I speak to one who has been saying, “No man cares for my soul”? Do they quite pass you by? Are you like a man on a raft, who has seen many a vessel go by, but cannot manage to make anyone see him and come to his rescue? Put your trust in the Lord, ye who are derelict, and drifting fast to destruction, for “He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth.” Looking to God when you have no one else to look to, you will find in Him a true helper.

The ends of the earth may mean also, *the most tried.* Where the cold is most severe, or where the dog-star burns most furiously, there we have the ends of the earth. And you who are most poor or most sick, or who have least of ability and talent, you are those who should make God your confidence, for He delights to be the strength of the weak, the fullness of the empty. God’s grace is the hospital for sick souls, come ye and enter it. He lifts the poor from the dunghill to set him among princes. Driven to your wits’ end, brought down to life’s dregs, take the Lord for your confidence, and it shall be well with you.

“The ends of the earth.” Well, they are *the hardest to reach.* We have around us men and women who are as hard to get at as the North Pole. We do not know how to speak to them so that they will understand us, for they are so ignorant. We would, if we could, do them good, but they are so depraved that we are half afraid that they will do *us* harm. It may be, they are so proud and conceited that we can hardly get a good word in edge ways with them.

Sailors, you must have met with fellows to whom you give a wide berth. You never felt inclined to take them on board. These ships are too far gone to be towed into harbor, and you clear out, lest when they sink you should be sucked down with them. Yet the Lord is ready to help even these. Those whom no man can pity, and no man can help, God can love and save. A mortal arm is too short to reach these shipwrecked souls. Cast away on an iron-bound coast, there is no hope for them but in the God of salvation, but in Him they may trust, for “He is the confidence of the ends of the earth.”

Ho, my comrades, when you are at your worst, God is still at His best. When you are all misery, He is all mercy. When you are at “the ends of the earth,” you may be at the beginnings of heaven.

IV. I shall not weary you, I trust, for I have come to the last point, which is this, WHAT IS GOD TO SEAFARING MEN? What should He be to sailors? He is the confidence of all them that are “afar off upon the sea.”

In the life of a seafaring man we have a picture of *the voyage of faith.* Hundreds of years ago, when men went to sea at all, their boats kept always within sight of shore. Your Greek or Roman mariner

might be quite master of his galley, but he could not bear to lose sight of a headland which he knew, for he had no compass, and knew little or nothing of astronomical observations. Here and there a lighthouse might be placed, but it would be regarded as a wonder.

But at this day a ship may not sight land for a month, and yet its position on the chart will be as certain as your position in the pew. The vessel will be steered entirely by observations of the heavenly bodies, and by chart and compass, and yet at the end of thirty days it will reach a point which was never within sight, and reach it as accurately as if it had been running on a tram rail instead of sailing over the pathless ocean. Its way is as certain as if it had traversed a railway from port to port.

Such is the life of a Christian—the life of faith. We see not spiritual things, but yet we steer for them with absolute certainty. We ought not to wish to see, for “We walk by faith, not by sight.” We take our bearings by the things in the heavens. We are guided by the Word of God, which is our chart, and by the witness of the blessed Spirit within, which is our compass. We see Him who is invisible, and we seek a heaven full of “things not seen as yet.”

Glory be to God, we shall reach the harbor as sure as a bullet goes to the mark. We are making direct tracks for the kingdom. We fly to heaven by a bee line even when we cannot see our way. Don’t shift a point, brothers. As the Captain of your salvation has set the helm, so let it remain. Trusting in God, we shall come to our desired haven in due time, and shall not miss our way. We need not fear shipwreck, for He that taught us to sail the spiritual sea will guide us safely till we come to the Glory Land.

Those that are “afar off upon the sea” are *on an unstable element*, but God is their confidence. They are never quiet, the boat is always rocking or rolling from side to side. On the sea they have no continuing city. Is it not so with us? We also dwell upon an unstable element. We talk of the solid earth, but it is only so in contrast with the waves. All things beneath the moon are changing.

When I went to my annual resting place in Mentone, after the earthquake, I felt a delight in realizing that everything around me was unsubstantial. I looked at the churches and the houses which had tumbled down, and I said to myself, “Now I feel how unstable the earth is.” I went up and down stairs, wondering that the house did not move, regarding it all as likely to give way.

Some such impression would be good for us all to carry daily about with us. We live in a world which passeth away. This life is made up of shadows, substance lies elsewhere. The things which are seen are temporal. You have dreamed yourselves into the belief that you live in a solid, substantial world, but it is only a dream, for the world passeth away. The elements which make up our life are no more to be depended upon than the waters of the sea. What is our life but a vapor? What does it depend upon but air?—the breath of our nostrils. Remember, you may die at any moment. Death may board you before the next watch.

Oh, to live like a man at sea! He has loosed his hold from all things, and feels himself committed to an unstable element, upon whose calm condition he cannot depend, for at any moment a storm may bear him away. The godly sailor’s confidence is in God. In God he has a foundation that cannot be moved. God is the mariner’s *terra firma*, and He is ours. All else is fickle, but God is immutable.

Next, they that are upon the sea are *liable to great dangers*. They cannot tell at any time that there may not come up from the North a howling blast, or from the South a tremendous cyclone. When above them all is clear blue, save “a cloud the size of a man’s hand,” they know that within an hour the heavens may gather blackness, and the sea, which now sleeps in calm, may rage in fury.

A sailor’s life makes him see the dangers which surround him, but you and I know that we also live in a world where tempests of trial may be upon us in a moment. When I go home after a time of spiritual enjoyment, and feel supremely happy, I say to myself, “I may expect trying news. I cannot be long at ease.”

In fact, one gets in this world to be afraid of too profound a calm, lest at the back of it should lurk a terrible tempest. Our sign is “The Checkers,” and close to the white square lies the black. At sea we may reckon upon all sorts of weathers, we must therefore keep the boat trim, and never neglect to set the helm, and keep the watch wide awake. The sailor must keep his eyes open, for rocks and quicksands lies

below, and hurricanes and cyclones lurk above. If he is a Christian man, his confidence is in his God, and his watchfulness is towards the world.

O true believer, let your confidence be in God, whether on sea or shore. Say, "O God, my heart is fixed; my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise." What if there should be the devil himself let loose upon us, as upon Job of old? Let us still trust in the Lord. When God gives the devil rope enough he will soon be down upon us, but brethren, we need not fear him, for Christ is the Master of the devil, and He can pull him up short when he comes rushing out to attack us. Let us not be afraid. He that is the confidence of them that are afar off upon the sea shall be our confidence in a world of storms.

But the men on the sea also *are familiar with trouble*. It is not only liability to storm, but the storm does break over them. I speak to many who have weathered no end of tempests. In your voyages across the mighty deep, you have found it no child's play to be tossed up and down like a ball in the hand of the storm. You have even been floating on the angry waves, clinging to a hen-coop, or lashed to the rigging. I do not envy you your trying experience, but spiritually, we drink from the same cup, for we too, have had our rough passages, and have been well-nigh cast away.

You do not want to see any more of such nights as you can remember, when sea and sky were blended in dread confusion, neither do I wish to see those months in which to me also, the winds were contrary. What a mercy in such seasons to have confidence in God! What is to be done if this fails us? But while God is with us it does not matter whether we live or die. We shall be with the Lord if we die, and if we live, the Lord will be with us.

Beloved friends, those that go down to the sea in ships *soon find out their own weakness*. A man looks like a man when he is on shore, or in command of a fine barque sailing along merrily before the wind, but in a great storm what a poor creature a man is. There he goes, yonder wave has swept him from the deck as if he were a spar. You hear one plaintive cry, and it is all over with him. The hungry deep thinks nothing of so small a mouthful. The wind howls still, and the waves dance with a horrid glee. If not thus drowned, the strong man is often rendered useless as to helping others. He cannot stir, for he could not keep his footing. He needs to be lashed to the rigging, or he will be washed away.

The bravest, the wisest, the strongest man is just nothing at all in the day of storm. Then the man almost envies the seabird that is tossed "up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billow's crown," because it is always safe, and comes up from the spray as fresh as ever.

Dear friends, you and I are often brought into conditions in which we feel that we are not worth half so much as the sea-swallows. We have no strength left at all, we are less than nothing and vanity. Oh, then, let God be our confidence!

I exhort all believers here to have more confidence in God than in all beside. Believe in the Lord a thousand fathoms deep. You will never believe too much nor too well of God. If friends forsake, if all means of comfort fail, let your confidence be so thoroughly in God that such things make no difference to you. It is a grand thing to get off the stocks, and really float on the main sea. It is glorious to have an anchor in the skies, and to hold to that alone, when everything else is dragging, and the earth itself is dissolved. A sailor is often brought to where, if God does not help him, he will be swallowed up, and you and I are always in the same condition. God is our all and we rest in Him, but apart from Him we are wrecked eternally.

God bless you, my shipmates! We are not yet come to the Pacific Seas, we are still rounding the Cape of Storms, but another name for it is the Cape of Good Hope. With God for our confidence we are not afraid. We shall all meet around the flagship of our Great Captain in the Fair Havens above. We are lying in these roads tonight very near each other, but may never cross each other's track again on this life's voyage. Meet me in the Islands of the Blessed, in the Land of the Hereafter, where the sun shall go no more down for ever. The Lord Jesus steer you thither. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.